

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 IO-10 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07

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FM AMEMBASSY MEXICO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0537

INFO USUN NEW YORK 1131

AMEMBASSY BELIZE

AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PBOR BH GT MX

SUBJECT: PRICE, SANDOVAL COMMENT FURTHER ON BELIZE-GUATEMALA
DISPUTE

REF: MEXICO 9005

1. IN AN INTERVIEW WITH EXCELSIOR ON OCTOBER 13, BELIZE PRIME MINISTER GOERGE PRICE EXPRESSED CONCERN OVER REPORTS OF "ABNORMAL MOVEMENTS OF ARMED FORCES ON THE BELIZE BORDER" WITH GUATEMALA. HE DEFENDED OPINIONS HE HAD PREVIOUSLY EXPRESSED (SEE REFTEL). "WE CAN BECOME INDEPENDENT TOMORROW BUT WE DO NOT WISH TO DO SO WITHOUT PRIOR ARRANGEMENTS FOR A PLAN OF DEFENSE AGAINST AGGRESSION." PRICE THEN COMMENTED INDIRECTLY ON PRESIDENT ECHEVERRIA'S STATEMENT OF OCTOBER 12: "HOW IS IT POSSIBLE FOR MEXICO TO SAY THAT IT HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH THE PROBLEM."

2. GUATEMALAN VP MARIO SANDOVAL ALARCON ALSO COMMENTED BRIEFLY UPON HIS DEPARTURE FROM MEXICO. HE WAS GRATIFIED OVER MEXICAN SUPPORT: "WE EXPECTED NOTHING LESS FROM THE MEXICAN GOVERNMENT." ANY FURTHER COMMENT, HE INDICATED,
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WOULD BE MADE IN NEAR FUTURE BY THE PRESIDENT OF GUATEMALA.

SANDOVAL WAS SEEN OFF (AS HE HAD BEEN RECEIVED) BY FIRST-RANKING CABINET SECRETARY MARIO MOYA PALENCIA, SECRETARY OF GOVERNMENT.

3. IN AN EDITORIAL ON THE BELIZE ISSUE ON OCTOBER 14 EXCELSIOR, IN EFFECT, TOOK ISSUE WITH ECHEVERRIA'S REJECTION OF MEDIATION ROLE. REFERRING TO HIS PRAISEWORTHY EFFORTS TO ASSIST IN RESOLUTION OF MIDDLE EASTERN PROBLEM, EDITORIAL NOTED THAT BELIZE ISSUE IS MUCH CLOSER TO HOME.

4. FONSEC DIRECTOR IN CHIEF (ASSISTANT SECRETARY) MANUEL TELLO TOLD AMBASSADOR THAT ECHEVERRIA HAD REFUSED TO SEE PRIME MINISTER PRICE BECAUSE OF LATTER'S STATEMENT TO PRESS IMMEDIATELY UPON ARRIVAL.

5. COMMENT: IT IS NOT EASY TO UNDERSTAND PRICE'S TACTICS IF HE REALLY HOPES TO OBTAIN MEXICAN MEDIATION OR SUPPORT. WE DO NOT KNOW WHETHER PRICE IS STILL SEEKING OR WOULD BE GRANTED A MEETING WITH PRESIDENT ECHEVERRIA BUT HIS PRACTICE OF ADDRESSING THE GOM THROUGH THE PRESS IS ALMOST CERTAINLY COUNTER-PRODUCTIVE.
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